

Statement of Representative Edward J. Markey (D-MA)
House Floor Debate on H. Res. 557
Wednesday, March 17, 2004

Mr. Speaker, if all we were doing here on the floor of the House today was commending our troops for their valor, there would be no debate. There would be no disagreement and there would be no opposition. This resolution, however, says something more than that we honor our troops. What this resolution says is that we – the House of Representatives – affirm “that the United States and the world have been made safer with the removal of Saddam Hussein and his regime from power in Iraq.”

There is not a Member of this body that mourns the fact that Saddam Hussein and his regime have been removed from power. We all agree that Saddam was a brutal thug.

The problem is that America was told before the war that we would be made SAFER by fighting to find and destroy Saddam’s weapons of mass destruction. We now know that these weapons either did not exist -- in which case we fought a war based on flawed intelligence, or that there really were weapons of mass destruction -- in which case they are now in the hands of Saddam’s Baathist henchmen or al Qaeda terrorists or some other party. That would put us in great peril.

Moreover, if you switch your TV dial from C-SPAN to CNN, you will see that another bomb has gone off in Baghdad today, killing more than 25 and wounding nearly 50 innocent people. You will see that two American missionaries have been assassinated in Iraq. You will see reports of more and more targeted assassinations of civilian employees of the Coalition Authority, as well as continued attacks on our military forces in Iraq.

Meanwhile, the real terrorist threat to America – al Qaeda – continues to organize and plan future terrorist attacks against our country. Osama bin Laden and some of his top lieutenants remain at large. Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, remains at large.

What is happening on the House floor today is symptomatic of everything that is wrong with the Bush Administration and Republican leaders in Washington. Instead of working to craft a bipartisan resolution to commend the valor of our troops, the Republicans prefer to slam through a partisan vote on a resolution declaring the Iraqi war to have made America safer. I’m sure that the Republicans have already prepared the television attack ads that will cynically suggest that anyone who voted against this resolution doesn’t support our troops.

I commend and honor every brave man and woman who is serving in Iraq and Afghanistan today. The conduct of the war by our men and women in uniform was superb; the problem is with the hollow premise on which they were sent into battle. This resolution is pure politics. We should instead approve a resolution that commends our armed forces for their valor and their sacrifices, and calls upon this body to provide them with the support needed to complete their mission quickly and return home safely.

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